Tapes: 032, 033

Transcript of Interview with Nolan Keil

Conducted by Bob Stewart

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INTERVIEW WITH NOLAN KEIL

[Interviewed by Bob Stewart]

BOB: Nolan, you were State Director, you came to Nevada as State Director in 1966. What was your career that led up to you coming to Nevada?

NOLAN: Bob, I've had a long history of work ever since I was born, almost, it seems like. I was born and raised on a ranch. But we went to town to school when I was about 13 and I've worked ever since. I worked in grocery stores. I've been with the public, you might say, all my life. I went to the CCCs. I was a leader. I went to the Army. I was a leader. I worked for various agencies, generally I was running crews. So, I had a lot of public relationships even during my early work. I came to the Bureau in 1966 in the old General Land Office. And have been the Director at the District level, at the State level, on various jobs, always in a leadership role. So, when I got to Nevada, I'd had about 27 years of experience.

BOB: You came through the Land Office, not through the Taylor Grazing Service?

NOLAN: That's right.

BOB: And you joined the Land Office, when?

NOLAN: When the Bureau was formed in 1966, about that time. I was with the Land Office at the time. I was with the old Department of Investigations working for Secretary Krug.

BOB: When did you join them?

NOLAN: I joined them in 1943, just before the War.

BOB: And what was investigations doing?

NOLAN: We were investigating lands mostly. Problem areas that came up between agencies or between an agency and an individual in the Department of Interior, not just in BLM. Indian Affairs, anything that came up. And after the war, we were given the job of selling all the Japanese relocation centers, disposing of those. And many of the airports that the Army had taken. We disposed of a lot of those. We were

appraising and selling airports, little airfields where they were training. We had lots of different investigations. In the military, I was in investigations, too, most of the time. So, I was always working with a lot of people which I think is a real advantage to my career here in the State having to work with people in the State.

BOB: Right.

NOLAN: I kind of came up through the ranks you might say. When I got to Nevada, my career took a different role. I was in the position then of working directly with staff having to be the leader in this staff work. Before I had always been a staff working under some other leader. And the first thing I come to realize was the assignment involved a lot of changes in philosophies that was going that I hadn't really recognized before. When I first came to work, the philosophy of resource management was to dispose of it. Let's get rid of this land. But when I got to Nevada, it was a retention type thing. Let's retain it and manage it. So that philosophy, really, was a reverse for me, you know, in a lot of ways.

BOB: Was that a philosophy that was supported by the people of Nevada at that time, primarily the ranch and rural.

NOLAN: I think with the people in Nevada and the people of the West, all together, pretty much will. And even the Taylor Grazing Act preamble says that we will manage it until disposed of. So, it was the philosophy that was a build up over, since the homestead or maybe even before the homestead days and just at the time of the Taylor Act, it was beginning to change a little bit. Recognize that we're going to manage it until we dispose of it. A lot of it we were never going to dispose of and still that way, I think. So, the use of the public land philosophy changed. When I first become acquainted with it, the user, if you leased a piece of land or sold it, he to do everything, build wells, reservoirs. By the time I was here, the philosophy had switched around to the point where the Bureau was going to do a lot of that. They were going to file water rights with the state. They were going to drill the wells. They were going to build plastic pipelines and distribute water all over. The user was pretty much just to pay for the use of the land and the Bureau would put in the improvements. Complete change of this philosophy. Another thing I noticed the mineral programs were pretty much on the basis of patenting everything

to the mining claimant, especially on a non-oil and gas type minerals, the hard rock minerals. If you took a piece of land, you took the mineral rights and you didn't have to worry about somebody coming along and leasing it out from under you. But in 1920, it become to be implemented more and more. By the time I got here, we were leasing oil and gas. So, we were into leasing more than a disposal type one on the minerals even. Oil and gas and sodium potassium, phosphates, this sort of thing.

BOB: Those came in during World War II as.

NOLAN: Pretty much so. It was enacted back in 1920 but you know it takes quite a bit of time for an Act to become operative in the field. Well, anyway, when I got here, we were even leasing sand and gravel in the Las Vegas area. Had a lot of problems along the strip, people trying to obtain those favorable sites through a sand and gravel claim which didn't come under the law. We had a lot of changes in the wild horse program during the years. When I first was on the District, horses were trespassers. There was feral horses. There was no such thing as a wild horse. Somebody had some horses out there. If they got to be a nuisance, we rounded them up and told them to come and kill them, get rid of them. But by the time I got to Nevada, they were wildlife. They had changed from feral animals to wildlife. And you couldn't hardly touch them because of things like Wild Horse Annie's law to protect wild horses. And then about the time I was leaving Nevada, they passed another protection Act which really put the screws, you might say, on disposal of wild horses. And the first job I had when I went to Washington after living in Nevada was the setup of Wild Horse Management Commission to tell the Bureau how to handle wild horses. I don't think they found out yet to this day how to handle them.

BOB: I'm not sure I want to react to that comment.

NOLAN: When I was in college, I took my degree in plant ecology. This was back in 1941 and ’42.

BOB: And where?

NOLAN: At the University of Minnesota under Dr. Cooper. He was an outstanding ecologist in the United States.

BOB: Nolan, let me stop right there just for a minute. And

we didn't talk about where your childhood was. Where did you grow up?

NOLAN: I grew up. I was born in Colorado on a ranch in Colorado, but I grew up on a ranch in Montana. In the the Gallatin Valley out of Bozeman.

BOB: Then what led you to Minnesota to school?

NOLAN: I took my undergraduate work in Range at Montana State. I went to Idaho on a fellowship and taught me in Plant Physiology. And then I took my Master’s Degree at Minnesota in Plant Ecology. If you told someone you were an ecologist, you had to spend about a half an hour explaining what that was. They didn't understand it. Later, they bastardized the work to mean environment. You were going to ruin the ecology of a place and ecology, of course, all it is is the study of relationships. And mine happened to be plant relationships. Later they changed the word and now they use pretty much the word environment. But for a time, they were calling it ecology. But the philosophy, again, as to these relationships, I think, changed over the years. The idea at first was anything you did was pretty much the to favor some industry, some operating ranch, that sort of thing. But as the word environment become more and more used in the press and among the people, pretty quick it almost means pollution. When you talk about environment, the first thing people think of is well, what are they doing to pollute? It's really funny the way some of these things have evolved. Another change I noticed was in the change from Bureau's thrust to hire and develop and train good technicians. As time went on, about the time I hit Nevada, you had to look more and more and more toward politics. So, a lot of our technicians had to be politically involved and become politicians to get the job done. Everything you wanted to do, of course, you had to sell to Congress. And the only way to sell something to Congress was to have a good political leader who could do it. And many of our Directors, even our Secretaries, were strong in this area and it never filtered down much to State or District level until about this 1960 period. Then the State Directors had to start becoming politicians. And everything you did, you finally wound up visiting with a Senator on, with the Governor on, or someone to make sure that it was politically astute. A real change in the approach to programs, I thought. Well, when I got to Nevada, I guess Udall was Secretary of the Interior and during my tenure, it changed. And Roger C.B. Morton became Secretary.

They both had a little different philosophy. Udall was pretty much favorable to conservation, to wilderness areas, to these kind of programs. But the Administration after him kind of went the other way, favored getting rid of everything we could, minimizing all of our management areas, and keeping things down to as low a level as possible. Director of the Bureau under Udall was Rasmussen. And he was a local western person from Idaho. Very favorable to getting rid of everything he could. But the first time he tried to get rid of something, particularly sale of public lands, he got hit with the other side of the picture and the politicians reversed him pretty much. He soon found that he was really playing politics in pretty near every program he had. When I left the Bureau, I went to, left Nevada, I went to Washington, DC, and was under Burt Silcock as Director. And under his direction, we had programs involving mostly offshore continental shelf oil and gas leasing and the Alaska Pipeline situation with the major thrust during that period, immediately after I left Nevada. We weren't operating very much funds in Nevada when I came. I think our total appropriation was about 4 million dollars and we got revenues back in about 3-1/2 million dollars. So, we were operating a little in the red at that time, although we were providing a lot of services to people, some very cheap grazing, in particular. We had, what do you have now? About 26 million dollars, I think.

BOB: Right.

NOLAN: About 26 million dollars in appropriations. We had 208 people in the State staff when I came.

BOB: Statewide in 1966?

NOLAN: Statewide in 1966, we had 208. When I left, we had 200.

BOB: And that's 1972?

NOLAN: This was 19, well, I think it was 1971 figures. I didn't get the ’72 one. Our revenues taken in was around 2-1/2 million at the time. You're taking in somewhere in the neighborhood of 16 million, I think, now.

BOB: Right.

NOLAN: Mostly, from oil and gas.

BOB: Mostly oil and gas and minerals.

NOLAN: We had about the same lands that you have now. Those haven't changed a great deal. 68 percent of the state was administered by BLM and about 12 percent, I think, 10 percent of the state was administered by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife. They had quite a large number of, quite a large acreage of game range. The Forest Service had about 5-1/2 million acres and still do, somewhere in that neighborhood.

BOB: They're up from that.

NOLAN: Bureau of Reclamation had about 1.2 million, a lot of it in rights-of-way along the river, Colorado River. The Department of Defense had about 3 million acres and, I think, the rest of the state, about 9 million acres, was privately owned. There wasn't very much out of the whole works.

BOB: That all depends on your perspective now. The state of New Jersey only has eight million acres total, so there's more private land in Nevada than there is in the entire state of New Jersey.

NOLAN: Well, I think, that's a good balance. The land in New Jersey is pretty valuable, well developed. And maybe when Nevada gets that developed, we'll have more of it in privately owned land, too. During the ’60's, particularly in the last half when I was here, some of the legislation that was on the books or that was being put on the books had quite an impact on us. One of the principal ones was the land, the Conservation Act of 1964. Classification and Multiple Use Act, I think they called it. We were just beginning to implement it. One of our first jobs, of course, was to get as much inventory as we could. But we started to classify lands on a broad basis. The Sales Act was, there were several sales acts that had a real impact on us during that period. The lands in southern Nevada, particularly those in and around Las Vegas, was moving into private ownership, as you know, for development of the strip down there, the gambling casinos and hotels. But further south, in the very, very tip of Nevada, there was a BLM land along the Colorado River that was undeveloped but the people in southern Nevada was looking toward it for some kind of development that would help them economically. California-Edison of Los Angeles

wanted to build a big powerplant down at that tip and pipe coal from New Mexico on a slurry line over to the powerplant. So, they applied for a special act of Congress to allow them to purchase some 15,000 acres. And then Congress gave them that right and they gave them a time limit of 5 years to come up with their plans. They failed to do it, so they had to extend their legislation three or four times. But finally, they did get some land sold under that Act that has a real impact on the state. Right now, the whole town of Laughlin is being built and it's going to be one of the big gambling areas in the state.

BOB: Yes, it is.

NOLAN: So, this was one of the more important land sale acts, I think, that took place during my tenure, here. And we were glad to get that finally into patent. The other piece of legislation that.

BOB: Let me ask, on that C&MU, one of the areas that was never classified was Elko County. What happened that they weren't classified?

NOLAN: Well, to start it off, I guess, we picked the easy ones first to start with. We classified some 900,000 acres of land in the Red Rock area out of Las Vegas because the Bureau of Fisheries had reduced the size of their game range. And we had this area south of the highway, taking in all that Red Rock area, to come out of the game range and go into public administration by the Bureau. We classified that very easily, had local meetings. We classified some land over in east of Fallon East Gate where the University of Nevada and the Bureau was going to some hydrological studies. And we classified that fairly easy with local meetings. We held local meetings in Elko and we come up with proposed classifications in that and published them. The County Commissioners and the local people went along with it or maybe I should say they didn't come forward and object in any great extent. But then after, we were about ready to finalize classification, they reversed this position and came forward and said, no we don't want it classified. And we backed off and didn't classify it. I understand that since then, why you've had some interesting turn of events.

BOB: Yeah, that point of classification has come up in the National Wildlife Federation lawsuit has worked to Elko's

advantage not to have been classified.

NOLAN: Well, that's good because. We were just kind of feeling our way and learning what we were doing. Trying to comply with the law and I think the law, you know, the law was a four-year law.

BOB: Right.

NOLAN: It expired at four years. They finally extended it another year. One of the reasons they extended it is because they had the Public Land Law Review Commission set up during this period of time. My former boss, just before I came to Nevada, was appointed the head of that Commission, and went to Washington to, this was Neil Nelson, to come up with recommendations on public land laws that should be made by Congress in changing them. There were some 5,000 laws dealing with public lands that many of which were just completely obsolete, put on the books for a specific purpose. So, they were trying to reduce and get rid of some of these. And the Public Land Law Review Commission come up with the recommendation of a new Classification Act. And I think you call it FLPMA now. I don't know what that means.

BOB: Federal Land Policy and Management Act.

NOLAN: Well, that came a little bit after my time.

BOB: It actually was not passed until 1976. Nolan, the Commission came up with the book One-Third of the Nation's Land and in that there also was mention of the Nevada book in which Nevada made a pitch to get a, as I remember, 2-million-acre grant of lands. Were you at all aware of that or involved that?

NOLAN: Well, I knew that the state was making that pitch. In fact, they have made it several times, you know, trying to replace, I think, the lands that they give up, the school lands, with an acreage about equal to that. They kind of got shanghaied in the early days by some of the San Francisco mining interests in giving up their school lands. And they've been sorry for it every since and they've tried several times and maybe someday they will get that grant, I don't know. Every time Congress changes, why they should be back knocking at the door again.

BOB: Right.

NOLAN: Get another chance.

BOB: So, the National Commission then really focused public attention on the public lands?

NOLAN: And the public land laws.

BOB: Right.

NOLAN: They recommended changing the mineral law, the Old Mining Law, 1872 Mining Law. It didn't get done until later, has been modified since. They recommended taking off hundreds and hundreds of acts that have been taken off. They tried to take off the Desert Land Act, but they didn't get that removed. And this has been quite an impact on the state of Nevada. And while I was here, we were patenting quite a few parcels of land under the Desert Land Act. In many of the valleys where there was supposed to be water, here we had the conflict always of checking with the State Engineer. Can the State allow a water development here so we can allow a Desert Land Act? Sometimes they and sometimes they didn't. Sometimes they made friends and sometimes they made enemies. As you always do. That's one nice thing about the public land laws. Whenever you make a ruling under somebody's application favorable to him, while you make a ruling against somebody else who applied probably for the same piece of land that it's unfavorable. I found this out early in oil and gas leases. I spent one winter in Cheyenne, Wyoming, writing oil and gas leases. And we had more people knocking on the door cussing us out for turning them down. But we always had a happy guy at the other door who got the lease. And all the public land decisions have this characteristic that you make one happy and you make a group unhappy. I remember Fish Lake Valley down at the edge of Nevada by White Mountain. There was some desert land people in there who were located by a woman out of Los Angeles. She got all them a location. And the State Engineer wouldn't issue water permits. So, they fought that battle for several years. Finally, they allowed one, I guess as a test. Anyway, the one they allowed was hers. The locator's. You can imagine what happened to all those people who had paid her for a location when she was the one that got the allowed. I think there might have been a little bit of connivance just to test the waters by giving her the allowance. I got a book thrown at me for that, on that decision because I was in Los

Angeles, and she was in Los Angeles, and she wanted to get mad at the Bureau but there wasn't anyone at the Bureau there but.

BOB: But Nolan Keil.

NOLAN: The man who did the decision was in Reno. I got that one. Well, another piece of legislation that came about just as I was leaving was the protection act for the wild horses. And that one, I won't talk about because I don't know anything good to say. We set up a commission. We had all kinds of non-Bureau people. We had veterinarians. We had horse specialists. Mr. Wright from over by Elko was on the commission. They made recommendations and nothing ever happened. A man died, as you'll recall, and left them a good sum of money to the programs of what to do with horses. I don't know whether they spent any of that money or not or if what they have spent has done anything.

BOB: That's in Nevada. The Leo Heil will?

NOLAN: The Leo Heil will. And.

BOB: They have spent some of that money for some programs and they're spent a piece of it now to produce a film that will help tell the wild horse story. But, Mr. Heil in his will made it very difficult to actually. He left it to the State and the State doesn't manage wild horses, the Bureau does.

NOLAN: And they don't even come up with a good recommendation to the Bureau on how to manage them, I guess. And that was about all that could be hoped for.

BOB: Right.

NOLAN: Well, I don't see an end to that program until there's some more legislation pushed through Congress that will help. The Recreation and Public Purpose Act was an earlier Act, but it was very active during my tenure, during the later part of my tenure here in the state. And I refer to this and I think a lot of other people do to as a particular case by a man by the name of **Sweep**. It was locally called the **Sweep** swap. And the history of the thing is the Bureau of Recreation was trying to put together a park over at Point Reyes, California.

BOB: Bureau of Outdoor Recreation.

NOLAN: Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. I forget a lot of these.

BOB: Well, they've changed so many times since then.

NOLAN: Well, they're trying to put together Point Reyes National Park area over there, they were having trouble getting the inholdings, private land in it, into public ownership. So, they made as many changes as they could in the state of California. And they came over to Las Vegas and they made a land exchange there where they offered somebody some public land if he would surrender his title. But then they came working through the checkerboard area of Nevada and they filed dozens and dozens of exchanges with people who wanted to block up some of the checkerboard area. And give the title that they had, they bought title in Point Reyes, and they were going to trade it for land over here. It looked pretty good on the surface to start with because there was a few parcels that they could put together into a ranch and help a ranch unit out. But then they got to getting too close to town. They were getting in close to Elko and selecting lands that the city had their eye on. And they were selecting lands that other agencies had their eye on. So, all at once, it blew up. And they got about two or three trades through and they stopped all the rest. Well, you can imagine the kind of articles that were published in San Francisco who are all in favor of it and the kind of articles that were published in Nevada who were against these kinds of trades that was undermining the growth and expansion of Elko or undermining the growth and expansion of Battle Mountain or whatever area that was being. So, the **Sweep** Swap became one of those kind of cases that no matter how many times you pushed it down, it always flared up somewhere else.

BOB: Nolan, the **Sweep** Swap led to an entry in FLPMA, also called the Organic Act by BLMers led to a phrase in there that forbids exchanges across state lines. Now that's come back in a different format. Nevada would like to get Aerojet General down in southern Nevada and Aerojet General has an expansive land in Florida that the United States government would like to get. And so, Nevada is now actively trying to arrange for an interstate exchange of land.

NOLAN: Pretty near everything you do can come back to haunt you.

BOB: What goes around, comes around.

NOLAN: I remember when I came here, one of the things they were talking about was the Hughes exchange.

BOB: We're still talking about that.

NOLAN: Exchanging of tremendous beautiful tract of land just west of Las Vegas where some checkerboard **cheap?** grasslands around

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NOLAN: When about was the Hughes exchange.

BOB: We're still talking about that.

NOLAN: Exchanging of tremendous, beautiful tract of land just west of Las Vegas where some checkerboard **cheap?** grasslands around Winnemucca. They had to have the land and the congressional delegation went strongly behind them because they were going to do research and development on rockets and rocket fuels, this sort of thing. Well, they hadn't anymore got squared away, then here come Curtis Wright. They had to have the same kind of a setup for their research and development, and they took a lot of the land, you know, around Virginia City and up here. Always through congressional pressure, this sort of business. They always had to have a lot of congressional pressure behind it to get it through because it was hard to get equal values. While I was here, we had another one come up. North American wanted to get a big chunk of land just north of Sparks.

BOB: Palomino Valley.

NOLAN: Palomino Valley between here and the Indian Reservation. And the same old story. A lot of congressional pressure and they finally got through for research and development. They were going to work with Aerojet out of Sacramento. I think they tested one engine. My wife, I know, was considering working out there with their research. But before she got on the job, it was over with. And now they put it up in 48-acre parcels and this sort of thing to sell it.

This is kind the history of those big swaps. And I'm sure the one that they're talking about with the lands in Florida would line up somewhat in the same kind of a category, ten, fifteen years from now. It's a lesson, I think, that might be learned if it wasn't for the political aspect of it again. You don't learn lessons through the political, I think, approach to these things.

BOB: Nolan, let's, if you don't mind, talk about some of the people for a minute. What I'd like you to do is give me just a two or three sentence description of them, their style, what kind of a friend or a person they were. And let's start with Karl Landstrom, a former Director.

NOLAN: Karl Landstrom was a Bureau employee who came up through the ranks and got to be on the Public Land Law Committee for the House of Representatives. From that position, he came over as Director of the Bureau. He's a very head strong individual but very knowledgeable and had I think or provided leadership that we hadn't had the Bureau touch to for some time before.

BOB: His Associate was, his first Associate was Harold {**Hawkmeth**}.

NOLAN: Right. Harold was an outstanding individual to handle the people, handle the public quite well and also a career employee, an economist who came up from the Portland area. And I think he was outstanding as far as I'm concerned in the way he could handle and did handle the small tract program in southern California. This was a real headache, and Harold understood it, was on top of it, worked with the Congressional people very well, particularly Senator Stevens from Alaska who was in that time. And another man by the name of {**Meabe**} who was a Bureau employee in Arkansas, the Arkansas Office at that time.

BOB: Now, the State Director at that point would have been R.D. Neilson?

NOLAN: No, the State Director in Utah was R.D. Neilson but the State Director here in Nevada was Russell Penney.

BOB: Right. Okay.

NOLAN: Later to become Director of California. He followed,

he was followed by myself here in Nevada. The California Director was Neil Nelson, a career employee who also was outstanding in public relations. And a very good program management man. One who I thought could delegate better than anyone I had ever bumped into.

BOB: What kind of relationship did the State Directors have among themselves?

NOLAN: I think they were a close knit.

BOB: Did they get together regularly?

NOLAN: A lot of them had experience from back in the Grazing Service days or the Land Office days, had come up through all the years working together, and they got together three or four times a year on programs and on personnel management, even on legislative programs. Some of them were more influential than others working with their congress people. But a lot of the legislation we got on the books, I think, was generated by the State Directors getting together and identifying needs and identifying solutions and taking solutions to the Congressmen which worked out.

BOB: As we were talking when we broke, you connected the name Irving Senzel with the CFR.

NOLAN: Irving was always a Washington staff person who was an attorney and worked very closely with the Department on all new laws that were enacted by Congress. And it fell on his shoulders to work with, not on the Department, but with the field to bring together a code of federal regulations under which we could administer a law. And he did a lot of work with the people in the field to identify areas of problems that would be generated if certain things went into the code or things that should go into the code that would help with problems in the field. An outstanding man, really.

BOB: How about Boyd Rasmussen?

NOLAN: Boyd was a former State Land Commissioner from Idaho, and he knew the local picture quite well in Idaho. I think, and he was a Forest Service employee also. So, he understood some of the technical problems. He provided good leadership and was a good delegator too. He leaned on his staff very heavily and

he used his staff very well.

BOB: These people came up through the ranks and then was Curt Berklund the first one to appointed as a political Schedule C?

NOLAN: I'm not acquainted with the history, but I don't think he was. This often had political appointees creep in. They had people, you know, in various places and the Presidents who they had to take care of sometimes. And thought this was true of Curt, but this often happens through all agencies down through the years. I don't think Curt was the first one but. Curt was Assistant Secretary for Public Lands before he became Director. And Curt and I worked together very closely. We did a lot of leg work in Alaska on the Alaska Indian Claims Act, Native Claims Act of Alaska. And also on the Alaska Pipeline. He and I visited almost all of the native villages throughout Alaska working on various allotments of lands to the Indians. So, when he came to be the Director of the Bureau, he had a good background in that area.

BOB: How about George Turcott?

NOLAN: Well, George is a work horse. Always has been, always will be. I think he almost worked himself sick a lot of times. And he was an up through the ranks type of person. He came from. He spent quite a bit of time over in Elko. And maybe even taught school at one time, I'm not sure. But George was always ready to help you. He never knew when to quit. And I enjoyed working with George very much.

BOB: How about any of the people that you worked with here in the Nevada State Office. Does anyone stick in your mind?

NOLAN: The State Director sticks in my mind because I brought Ed here, Ed Spang in as Chief of our Resources. And thank God, I did. He had a good background both in the field, in Washington, and as you can see, what a good job I did training him.

BOB: Right.

NOLAN: He now became your State Director. We had other people other people here in the Bureau.

BOB: Roger McCormick who was his Associate when he came. Roger said he trained him. Now.

NOLAN: Well, I trained Roger.

BOB: Oh, I see, all right.

NOLAN: I hired Roger.

BOB: So, you got to train both of them?

NOLAN: Right. In fact, enjoyed that as much as anything I think I ever did in the Bureau was working with people in development training approach. They were a good many of the people in Washington on the staff back there I had an influence on one way or another. Bud Chandler who was head of lands and minerals, I know and different ones down through the years. They moved around a lot so I didn't develop all of them, but I had a little input into most of them.

BOB: Right. Nolan, one of the things that some of the other people we've interviewed have talked about has been the Nevada report. Now obviously that happened as Ed {**Rollin**} recalls. When Ed **Rollin** was here and actually after, I think, also after Ed Spang had left here. But it was developed out of Washington. Were you part of that at all?

NOLAN: No, I'm not the least bit familiar with it.

BOB: Oh, all right.

NOLAN: Bob, I just don't know. I'd have to do a little research. You never know for sure, you know, someplace back in the background you may have made inputs that finally precipitate to the top. But I'm not familiar to discuss that cause I don't know it.

BOB: Okay. Did you have any highlights you wanted to talk about?

NOLAN: Well, I've talked about this classification thing but what did we do after we got all this legislation. One of the things we had to do was start inventories and we're still doing inventories, I guess, here in the state. But we had to do a recreation inventory right off the bat to identify areas that

had recreational value. There was two thrusts there. One was the need for the recreation areas to be recognized like Lake Meade and Red Rocks. And the other was there was a recession going on and there was a make work program being pushed and some of our recreation areas were developed under make work programs. We had to identify what we could do and where they were. We developed several. Some around Hawthorne Recreation site. We developed the Ruby Marsh. We developed forty units over at Ruby Marsh into a recreation site that's still very popular.

BOB: Now, under the Forest Service.

NOLAN: Now under the Forest Service.

BOB: Right. You did wild horse too then?

NOLAN: No. We did a few units of wild horse. I think they did some more since, but we did wild horse. We also did 50 units at Wilson Reservoir. All of these were, resulted from the push on recreation and classifications and a need for some make work programs in the state. So, we started archeological and anthropological investigations and inventories. We didn't have the kind of capability that you have today, but we started these because we were really forced into identifying as far as right-of-way grants were concerned and other types of uses. So, where there were archeological values, we started that inventory. We had to inventory all of our resources but that didn't really get funded and developed a staff of people until after FLPMA and some of the lawsuits that was generated under that. And a court order, I guess, that required it. But we started trying to put that together because we had to use it in our classification actions. We had another little interesting inventory going on. And that was of the rare and endangered species of pupfish down around Pahranagat Valley. And we had desert _____ and we had these pupfish that had to be identified, their habitat had to be established, and then we had to find out what to do with them. And we didn't do much with it. We about lost it.

BOB: In the 1970's, from 1971 through 1978, the single topic that received, the single topic around which the Governor of Nevada received more correspondence than other any other single topic was the desert pupfish.

NOLAN: Desert pupfish. I remember Yoakum, Jim Yoakum here took some of them from down around the Devils Hole and moved

them over by Ely. There was a hot springs over there. He says, well, if we lose that maybe I can save a few over here in these hot springs. The pup fish program, at that time, I guess, was replaced by the wild horse program later, huh?

BOB: I'm afraid you're right.

NOLAN: We had some interesting go arounds on release of exotic species by the Bureau, by the Department of Fish and Game in Nevada. I remember attending a hearing in, I guess over at Lovelock, it was where we were going to plant some exotic sheep from East Asia that were being developed in New Mexico, up in the Seven Troughs area. And this was quite a hassle. But they finally come up with the proposal that well, yes, you can put some up there as a test if you'll fence the section you want to put them in. Well, you can imagine fencing a section of land for sheep and keeping them in there. Another place they wanted to put some exotic animals was up on the mountain out of Hawthorne, what's it called, Mount Wilson or something?

BOB: Mount Grant?

NOLAN: Grant. Mount Grant. They were going to plant some sheep up there and they said, fine, we think you ought to put them up there, but you'll probably have to fence them to keep them there. So, they did. Well, the first year they put them up there, the mountain lions got into them. That put a setback on that program. So, there were quite a few replants of animals that were being considered and wanted to try out during my period. And we generally let them try them out under certain conditions. After public hearings. They were afraid of the sheep bringing a disease in that would get into domestic sheep. That problem's gone now because the domestic sheep are gone, and I don't think they'd have the same kind of a disease problem to worry about. We had studies going on. I mentioned them briefly before with University of Nevada. We set up a hydrological study over at the East Gate area which is east of Fowler. This was to be an ongoing study of 12 watersheds. There's 54 closed basins in Nevada and we picked out 12 of them and set this one up in East Gate to start with. We weren't too lucky on that one. And our problem seemed to be in working with the University, they either had to have more staffing to do and do it right. We could never get a report from them of where we stood. They'd keep asking for money and we'd say, well, we got to have a report of what's accomplished so far, where are you

headed, how far do you got to go? When I left here, it was still ongoing. But I don't think.

BOB: I haven't heard about it.

NOLAN: It was just one of those things you try to do but you don't have all the facilities and funds to do it on the scope that should to be done right. It needs to be done, I'm sure. I mentioned how we classified, our first classification, our second classification. But we classified a lot of land for public sales and small tracts, too, during this period. And we offered them but we didn't sell very many of them. It was down years for sales so we wound up with a lot of classified tracts which I think have been sold.

BOB: Were these under the old Small Tract Act?

NOLAN: Well, both, public sale and small tract, both. There was 56, I think, of them in small tracts around Las Vegas mostly. And at the time I left, we had sold seven. There was some 56 still available for people. We patented 15,000 to the state after we got {**McLaughlin**} set up with a small, about 3,000 acres, for that California Edison. We went ahead down through the years with a renewal of the legislative act.

BOB: Is that the Fort Mojave Act or the El Dorado Lands Act.

NOLAN: I think it's both of them in the 15,000 acres we're talking about.

BOB: Okay.

NOLAN: Another thing we classified that you're in the middle of today is we started classifying lands for geothermal steam development.

BOB: Finally coming to fruit.

NOLAN: We classified 38,000 acres.

BOB: This is when {**Magmo**} was interested in producing at {**Beowali**}.

NOLAN: Right. We classified lands at Steamboat Springs,

Beowali, and Brady Springs. I think by the end of 1967, we had classified 14-1/2 million acres of land. Part of this was never finalized particularly the Elko part we mentioned before. And I thought an outstanding thing in my career here was the dedication of the Red Rock Recreation Area. In October 29th of 1967, we had a dedication of that area. We had the Congressman, Senator Bible was there, Senator {**Kantit**}. We had the Secretary of Interior, Assistant, that was Harry Anderson. We had the Congressman from Colorado, can't think of his name right off the bat. But he was a big push in getting that put together for us.

BOB: Nolan, the C&MU Act is really the first steps of Nevada or of the Bureau beginning a solid, long-range planning program, isn't it?

NOLAN: Well, I would say one of any consequence. When I was a freshman in the Bureau, back in 1946, with Mr. Russ Penney and I put together a five-year plan about 2 inches thick covering the Region 1 up in Billings, Montana. This was the first really long-range plan that I ever was familiar with in the Bureau. It died on the vine. It was such a good plan that Russ got a year's scholarship at Harvard and helped him out that way. But it was one that was lacking in good, sound, basic data. So, until the Classification Multiple Use Act come along, we really didn't have the facilities to get this data together. And really not until FLPMA and the lawsuits under FLPMA came along did we actually get down to staffing and going on the ground and getting basic data.

BOB: But with C&MU we did begin some area management plans.

NOLAN: Oh, yeah. We had been working on allotment of grazing privileges ever since the Taylor Grazing Act went into effect based on range surveys and resource inventories they had. All pointed toward grazing. It wasn't broad enough. But during my tenure here, the information and the development of these grazing allotments had reached the point where there wasn't much more to be done. We just about had them all under some kind of an allotment. So, the shift, then, under the Classification Multiple Use Act was to move into allotment management plans. And _____ allotment management plans even today. I think it was a very good shift once we had the data to make allotment management plans. It's an awful job to put one on the ground until you get everything that you need developed. You got to

have the water. You got to have the fences. You got to have the roads. You've got to have some administrative people to see that the plan is carried out. And this is always been a shortcoming in the Bureau. Always short on just having personnel to really supervise a good, a number of allotment management plans. But it got started and it's going along. And I think it'll continue to get better and better. Another thing we started during this year that has given the Bureau some nice headaches is this restriction of displays along interstate highways and primary roads. We had to begin an inventory of these signs and we even started tearing some down.

BOB: This is Lady Bird Johnson.

NOLAN: Lady Bird Johnson come along and by the time I was here, we were trying to implement that program. And every time you tore a sign down, why you had a problem. And if you weren't out there supervising, why you had a lot more signs. That's all. And that's still not completely solved. And I think every time I read the paper, some city council or county commissioners all still got a sign problem that they got to do something about. It's not restricted to the Bureau alone. But we started that program. I guess it really relates to what you might call the 1980's was the environmental decade. All of these of things began to crop up and when it got into the 1980's, I left and left everybody with a lot of headaches to get the show on the road, so to speak. A very interesting aspect of this was our public affairs officer, your counterpart in Washington, who developed the Johnny Horizon Program. He came.

BOB: George Gurr

NOLAN: to fight pollution.

BOB: George Gurr?

NOLAN: No. That wasn't the right name. {**Matoom**} [McGoom?]

BOB: Oh, John **Matoom**.

NOLAN: John **Matoom**. I sometimes refer to him as Earthquake **McGoon** but he developed this Johnny Horizon Program and did any awful lot of work of setting things kind of parallel to the

Forest Service's Smoky Bear Program. We had litter bags and we had. I remember one time at Carson City, we had a big dedication of the Johnny Horizon Program. We got Burl Ives to come and sing and had a couple of movie stars.

BOB: That was during Nevada Day.

NOLAN: Nevada Day. And we put out a lot of Johnny Horizon bags. The whole thrust was to try to get something done toward eliminating litter and pollution of various recreation areas, any place, along the highways and all.

BOB: We have a new program just beginning called Public Lands USA, use, share, appreciate. Poor old Johnny Ho, though, he bit the dust. What happened to Johnny?

NOLAN: Well, I got two or three of his bags left.

BOB: I think we all do someplace.

NOLAN: But I haven't seen any of his posters or plaques at all.

BOB: You're not aware then of why he evaporated?

NOLAN: I don't know anything about his demise.

BOB: All right.

NOLAN: But I know he's gone pretty well.

BOB: Okay, we need to stop.

NOLAN: Pardon?

BOB: We need to stop for a minute.

NOLAN: Oh.

TAPE ENDED

BOB: Well, the Johnny Ho Program then did lead to some public awareness over litter and problems of that nature?

NOLAN: Yes, Bob. One of the things that we had to start

parallel with this or about concurrent with it was the development or the encouragement of dump site developments, trying to get the cities, the counties, the state, the Bureau.

BOB: Sanitary landfills.

NOLAN: And other agencies to set up some kind of sanitary landfill where we could get the people to push the garbage toward spots that we could control it. And we have, under the Public Purpose Act, facilities to patent lands to the various communities who want to set this up. And since the Environmental Protection Agency has come along, I'm sure that this early start was maybe even late at that. But it worked out and is working out and maybe causing problems.

BOB: What was happening before that then?

NOLAN: Garbage was going every place. The Highway Department was picking up garbage all the time. The Bureau and Forest Service was picking up. Most cities had some kind of a burning program where they would find a coulee where they could haul their trash out and set it afire to smoke and burn forever. No control at all what went into it. No control what they did after it got there, really, in the way of covering it up. So, it was a program that I think whose time had come. And it may have come through a little impetus from the Johnny Ho Program.

BOB: Wasn't there a suggestion about that time that got a lot of publicity that San Francisco was looking for a landfill and proposed the Black Rock Desert?

NOLAN: Yeah, the northern Washoe County. They wanted to take train load after train load and some of that area, maybe if they raised it four or five feet wouldn't hurt it. There's lots of sand up there that they could use for cutting cover. But, someday, this is going to be a, I think, realized. These big communities are going to have to haul their garbage to certain areas where. Maybe just like the dump sites they're talking about now with the nuclear waste. Other trash may fall into that same category someday to dispose of. They don't want to haul it out in the ocean and dump it anymore.

BOB: Not anymore.

NOLAN: They don't like that, so they got to figure out

something to do with it. And there's, I saw an area in the northern part of Los Angeles. Now if you saw it, it's high-priced homes. But it started in a _____ as a canyon that they dumped all this trash in and dumped it. Filled it and dumped it for years. And you go down there now and it's a beautiful spot. I don't know where they're dumping now, but maybe they're building up some other canyon. And this was 15 years before Johnny Ho was born.

BOB: Right.

NOLAN: Well, I think I've about run down. Another exchange that I thought was really important to the state. The Bureau of Sport Fisheries had some land around Lake Meade that was privately owned. And the Anaconda Copper Company was looking for some land up north of Tonopah to develop a {**Libinum**} [lithium?] mine. So, they got together and worked out an exchange that we approved. And they Anaconda Copper Company moved into Tonopah, built a big subdivision of houses. You might say, changed the whole nature of the town, just store after store. And revised the economy there tremendously except when they never got into production quite. About the time they were ready to go to production, they shut it down because they could buy ore somewhere else cheaper.

BOB: What time frame are we talking about?

NOLAN: This is in 1969 when this change was going on and when Anaconda got it put together.

BOB: Twelve years later, it came back around again.

NOLAN: Is it coming up again?

BOB: No, it came back around in the early 1980's and once again, the mine is closed down and gone.

NOLAN: Well, it was a result of getting this all together, patenting the lands with the minerals that started that Anaconda development there. Another program that was a headache and I guess it's fairly well. There was a time in the ’60's, early ’60's, when the Soil and Water Conservation people got several projects around the United States. The State Director worked on one up at Vale. The Vale Project. There was one in New Mexico in the {**Sansomon**} [San Simon??] Drainage Area. And we had

one in Nevada called the {**Biowali**} Project. And this involved Winnemucca District and the Elko District and the two counties and into a Soil and Water Project for the development of forage and the reduction of erosion. It went real well in Winnemucca District and they got most of the job done. But, again, over in Elko, it couldn't move. Classification was one of the things that held it up. The county wouldn't approve classification and also there was areas in the checkerboard land that was a problem in trying to get the program, project going. I don't know how many meetings we had on the **Biowali** Project trying to get it to be approved for both counties and operational. It died on the vine. It worked out fine in Winnemucca, but in Elko, I imagine it's still a pending project because certain land tenure adjustments had to be made and have never been made so that they could implement it. Another project over there that people was real favorable to was the Little Salmon Falls River fish facilities. Jim Yoakum, again, working with the Department of Fish and Game to develop an area on the Little Salmon where they could improve the habitat and even improve the fisheries. That was authorized and developed while I was here. I don't know whether it is still doing what it's supposed to do or not. I have never followed up. You might be interested or maybe you know. But like a lot of those projects, you know, _____ is always a problem. And has to be have something done with it. Also, during the time I was here, toward the last, we saw a start of a lot more development of power facilities. And the companies were out looking for rights-of-ways. We had quite a project going on study of right-of-ways.

BOB: The corridor study, was that?

NOLAN. Corridor studies and actual approval of right-of-ways during that time. One program that you have going pretty well now that we started the last year I was here. We got five, a little better than 5,000, about 56 hundred acres of, 56-man hours of volunteer labor. That was the first time we ever got volunteer labor. But I've noticed how this has grown throughout the Bureau, throughout the Forest Service. The people have fallen in behind and donated an awful lot of time anymore

BOB: We're very proud of last year's results and we intend to be even more proud of this year's results. It's a great program.

NOLAN: Well, we started off in 1970 with 5,264-man hours and I can remember that as well. And if you're proud now, you ought to think how proud we were the first go-around.

BOB: Right. The first piece. That really is neat. Nolan, a lot of change happened to the Bureau while you were on board. As you say, the environmental years developed. We might put it that way. Would you recommend a career such as yours today to a young person?

NOLAN: Yes. If a person could have a career like mine, they'd be the most fortunate one in the world. I worked all my life and I always seem to be moving in the right direction.

BOB: You kept your career in Washington, DC. Were they good years? A lot of people seem to fear going to Washington, DC.

NOLAN: If I could make a recommendation on going to Washington, DC, based on my experience, I would recommend a person go in about their 20th to 25th year of service, after they had a real good field background so that they wouldn't get surprised every time the phone rang in Washington with somebody's problem. And then come back to the field after they've had the Washington experience, come back to the field. I felt in my own case, I went a little late when I was topping a career. I never really got to come back to the field and give the field the benefits of my Washington experience. Many others have, as you know. But from a career standpoint, I recommend getting it a little earlier. But I never regretted one hour of it. I never, I would do it again the same way. The only reason I retired as early as I did is that there was an awful hassle going on around Watergate, Ehrlichman, Haldeman, Nixon. You couldn't always tell who was running the show.

BOB: Besides, at that point, the state of Nevada needed you to come bail out their parks program.

NOLAN: I enjoyed that too.

BOB: Our conversation today has been with Nolan Keil, retired from the Bureau of Land Management. Thank you, Nolan.

NOLAN: You're welcome, Bob.